RUTGERS, THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY  
SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK  
Master Syllabus

Course Number: Environmental Justice and Social Work  
199:910:553

Instructor:  
Office:  
Office Hours:  
E-mail:  
Term:  
Telephone:

Course Outline

I. Catalog Course Description:  
This course will highlight theories to enhance the students’ understanding of “Person-in-Environment” to be inclusive of the physical environment. Students will develop a paradigm regarding the interconnection of social work and environmental justice with an understanding of the bi-directional relationship of people and nature. Students will examine social work history and create an emerging perspective of social workers’ role with respect to the environment. This course will help students achieve the updated Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) competency “Advance Human Rights and Social, Economic, and Environmental Justice” by developing awareness of ecological crises, environmental injustices, and movements that are intended to serve marginalized populations. Students will discuss how social workers can increase equality through advocacy, education, and action.

II. Course Overview:  
This course will be based on a partnership between instructor and students in collaboration and commitment to mutual learning. Lectures, discussions, experiential exercises, and assignments will be the learning tools of the Environmental Justice and Social Work course. Students are expected to actively participate in class and attendance is mandatory. A critical goal of this course is to provide a safe environment for discussion of various points of view. Therefore differences in values, beliefs, and opinions expressed in the classroom will be respected.

III. Place of Course in Curriculum:  
This course is an elective available to all MSW students as part of the generalist portion of the curriculum. This elective uncovers concepts about ecology and sustainability to expand social work education, and subsequently practice, to be inclusive of environmental justice. No co or pre-requisites are required.
IV. Program Level Learning Goals and the Council of Social Work Education’s Social Work Competencies
The MSW Program at Rutgers is accredited by the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE). CSWE’s accreditation standards can be reviewed at www.cswe.org.

In keeping with CSWE standards, the Rutgers School of Social Work has integrated the CSWE competencies within its curriculum. These competences serve as program level Learning Goals for the MSW Program and include the following. Upon completion of their MSW education students will be able to: demonstrate ethical and professional behavior; engage in diversity and difference in practice; advance human rights and social, economic and environmental justice; engage in practice informed research and research informed practice; engage with individuals, families, groups organizations and communities; intervene with individual, families, groups organizations and communities; and evaluate practice with individuals, families, groups, organizations and communities.

This course will assist students in developing the following competencies:
CSWE Competencies:

Competency 2: Engage Diversity and Difference in Practice
Social workers understand how diversity and difference characterize and shape the human experience and are critical to the formation of identity. The dimensions of diversity are understood as the intersectionality of multiple factors including but not limited to age, class, color, culture, disability and ability, ethnicity, gender, gender identity and expression, immigration status, marital status, political ideology, race, religion/spirituality, sex, sexual orientation, and tribal sovereign status. Social workers understand that, as a consequence of difference, a person’s life experiences may include oppression, poverty, marginalization, and alienation as well as privilege, power, and acclaim. Social workers also understand the forms and mechanisms of oppression and discrimination and recognize the extent to which a culture’s structures and values, including social, economic, political, and cultural exclusions, may oppress, marginalize, alienate, or create privilege and power. Social workers:

• apply and communicate understanding of the importance of diversity and difference in shaping life experiences in practice at the micro, mezzo, and macro levels
• present themselves as learners and engage clients and constituencies as experts of their own experiences; and
• apply self-awareness and self-regulation to manage the influence of personal biases and values in working with diverse clients and constituencies.

Competency 3: Advance Human Rights and Social, Economic, and Environmental Justice
Social workers understand that every person regardless of position in society has fundamental human rights such as freedom, safety, privacy, an adequate standard of living, health care, and education. Social workers understand the global interconnections of oppression and human rights violations, and are knowledgeable about theories of human need and social justice and strategies to promote social and economic justice and human rights. Social workers understand strategies designed to eliminate oppressive structural barriers to ensure that social goods, rights, and
responsibilities are distributed equitably and that civil, political, environmental, economic, social, and cultural human rights are protected. Social workers:

- apply their understanding of social, economic, and environmental justice to advocate for human rights at the individual and system levels; and
- engage in practices that advance social, economic, and environmental justice.

V. Course Learning Goals:
1. Students will develop a working knowledge of theories, conceptual frameworks and diverse, culturally competent, perspectives related to social work and environmental justice.
2. Students will evaluate the impact of environmental injustice on marginalized populations.
3. Students will apply the discipline of social work to further environmental justice using social work values, knowledge and skills.
4. Students will evaluate the use of micro, mezzo and macro practice when addressing issues related to environmental justice.
5. Students will incorporate environmental justice as an integral part of social work while prioritizing cultural competency.

Additionally, the Code of Ethics of the National Association of Social Workers (1999, standard 1.05, p.9) mandates that social workers pursue knowledge about effective micro and macro practice with diverse and oppressed clients and the social systems with which they interact. As a result of this course, students are expected to begin a career-long process of learning and incorporating an understanding of culture and oppression into their practice.

VI. School of Social Work Mission Statement and School Wide Learning Goals

The mission of the School of Social Work is to develop and disseminate knowledge through social work research, education, and training that promotes social and economic justice and strengths individual, family, and community well-being, in this diverse and increasingly global environment of New Jersey and beyond.

School Wide Learning Goals: Upon graduation all students will be able to:
1. Demonstrate Ethical and Professional Behavior;
2. Engage Diversity and Difference in Practice; and
3. Engage, Assess, and Intervene with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities

VII. Required Texts and Readings


Other required readings (separate from textbooks) are available through the Rutgers University Library “Reading List” that is integrated into your Canvas course. To find your readings:
Click on the “Reading List” tab in the Canvas navigation bar to the left hand side of the course. Please note: this list contains links to articles and other required readings separate from the textbook (if applicable). Please follow the syllabus and/or Canvas Readings and Resources page in each module for more specific required readings and resources for each week (including textbook/media).

For further instructions please click here for a video tutorial

Useful Websites:
- Dr. Michael Yellow Bird video “Decolonizing the Mind” - [https://vimeo.com/86995336](https://vimeo.com/86995336)

VIII. Course Attendance and Participation Policies
Attendance is required and impacts your class participation grade. Absence, early departure, or lateness to class is acceptable only for compelling reasons, such as illness. Students may not miss class without a valid excuse. Valid excuses include illness with medical documentation, death of a loved one, or attending conferences as long as prior permission is obtained from the instructor. Students lose two points on final grade per unexcused absence. Students who miss more than three classes with or without a valid excuse may receive one course grade lower than their final grade when points are totaled. Appropriate use of cellphones and laptops, to support student learning, is acceptable.

IX. Diversity Statement (optional, can be modified as appropriate to the course)
The RU SSW supports an inclusive learning environment where diversity, individual differences and identities (including race, gender, class, sexuality, religion, ability, etc.) are respected and recognized as a source of strength. Students and faculty are expected to respect differences and contribute to a learning environment that allows for a diversity of thought and worldviews. Please feel free to speak with me if you experience any concerns in this area.

X. Assignments and Grading
Below is the grading scale for the MSW program

- A 92-100
- B+ 87-91
- B 82-86
- C+ 77-81
Assignment Value

Assignments and Grading Scale:
Students are expected to do all required readings. Students will also be given assignments that will enhance the experiential learning. Grades for the course will be based on the following assignments. Percentage values for each assignment represent the maximum credit available.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignments</th>
<th>Points</th>
<th>Due</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reading Summary/Brief</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>As assigned</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Short Paper defining Environmental Justice</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Week 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mind Maps themed on Environmental Justice and Social Work.</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Week 1 and Week 15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Intervention Paper</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>Week 12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advocacy Presentation</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Weeks 14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation/Attendance</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sum of all points</td>
<td>100 points</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Description of Assignments:
Participation is measured by a combination of attendance, engagement and demonstration of having read weekly assignments.

- **Reading Summary**: Students will lead discussions. Discussion can be generated by creative methods including, but not limited to, asking questions, relating it to field placement, or conduct an activity focused around a student-created worksheet or vignette. Students are assigned readings at the beginning of the semester.

- **Short Paper** defining environmental justice in 4-6 pages. Must have one inch margins, double space, Times New Roman font size 12 and all other APA format requirements. Students should use at least three scholarly sources. Students should describe their personal definition of environmental justice and compare to other perspectives/theories.

- **Mind Map** is a visual depiction of a concept using words and images to organize thoughts. Students will create an image that displays their concept and understanding of the relationships between social work and environmental justice.

Examples of various themed mind maps can be viewed: [Mind Map for Religion Peace and Justice](#)
• **Final Intervention Paper** will be 10-15 pages proposing or describing a social work intervention that promotes environmental justice. Must have one-inch margins, double space, Times New Roman font size 12 and all other APA format requirements. Students should use at least six scholarly sources. Student must identify the client/client system. Describe the theory/theories related to the intervention. The student will explain how environmental justice, marginalized populations, and the health of the environment are considered within the intervention. Students must conduct an assessment of the intervention, analyzing strengths, limitations and potential areas of growth. This intervention must address issues discussed during this course or in the readings as it relates to social work and environmental justice.

• **Advocacy Presentation** will concisely describe the intervention subjected in the student’s final intervention paper. Students can use video/brochure/poster as visual aid. The student will then facilitate a group conversation that encourages critical thinking regarding the respective intervention and its relationships to social work. Each student will have a maximum of 30 (depending on enrollment) minutes for presentation and discussions.

**XI. Academic Resources**

**Library Research Assistance**  
Dr. Karen Hartmann is the social work the social work librarian on the New Brunswick Campus karen.hartman@rutgers.edu p. 848-932-6104 ;  
Natalie Borisovets is at Newark, Dana Library natalieb@rutgers.edu973-353-5909;  
Katie Anderson is at Camden, Robeson Library: Katie.anderson@rutgers.edu 856-225-2830.  
They are all available to meet with students.

**Writing Assistance**  
Success in graduate school and within the larger profession of social work depends on strong writing skills. Several resources are available to help students strengthen their professional and academic writing skills. Writing assistance is available to all MSW students as described below.

**New Brunswick Campus**  
All MSW SSW students (New Brunswick, Camden, Newark, Intensive Weekend, online and blended) are eligible to access writing assistance at the New Brunswick Learning Center. Online tutoring may also be available. [https://rlc.rutgers.edu/student-services](https://rlc.rutgers.edu/student-services)

**Newark Campus**  
The Newark writing center is available for MSW students on the Newark campus by appointment. [http://www.ncas.rutgers.edu/writingcenter](http://www.ncas.rutgers.edu/writingcenter)

**Camden Campus**
The Camden learning center provides writing assistance for MSW students on the Camden campus. https://learn.camden.rutgers.edu/student-services/

Additional Online Resources

**APA Style**

All students are expected to adhere to the citation style of the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association, 7th edition* (2020). It can be purchased at [APA Manual 7th Edition](https://www.apa.org/publications and resources/books/aicpmanual). The Purdue OWL website also provide assistance with APA style [https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01/](https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01/)

**Email Etiquette for Students**
https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/694/01/

XII. **Course Evaluation**
Rutgers University issues a survey that evaluates both the course and instructor. This survey is completed by students toward the end of the semester, and all answers are confidential and anonymous. The instructor may also choose to conduct a mid-point evaluation.

XIII. **Academic Integrity**

As per Rutgers University Academic Integrity Policy, “Students are responsible for understanding the principles of academic integrity and abiding by them in all aspects of their work at the University. Students are also encouraged to help educate fellow students about academic integrity and to bring all alleged violations of academic integrity they encounter to the attention of the appropriate authorities.” All SSW students are expected to review and familiarize themselves with the [RU Academic Integrity Policy](https://www.RU Academic Integrity Policy) in its’ entirety.

As per Rutgers University Academic Integrity Policy, “The principles of academic integrity require that a student: make sure that all work submitted in a course, academic research, or other activity is the student’s own and created without the aid of impermissible technologies, materials, or collaborations; properly acknowledge and cite all use of the ideas, results, images, or words of others; properly acknowledge all contributors to a given piece of work; obtain all data or results by ethical means and report them accurately without suppressing any results inconsistent with the student’s interpretation or conclusions; treat all other students ethically, respecting their integrity and right to pursue their educational goals without interference. This principle requires that a student neither facilitate academic dishonesty by others nor obstruct their academic progress; uphold the ethical standards and professional code of conduct in the field for which the student is preparing.”
Students should review all types of Academic Integrity Violations per the RU Academic Integrity Policy. Below are some of the more common violations, as articulated in Rutgers University Academic Integrity Policy:

“Plagiarism: Plagiarism is the use of another person’s words, ideas, images, or results, no matter the form or media, without giving that person appropriate credit. To avoid plagiarism, a student must identify every direct quotation using quotation marks or appropriate indentation and cite both direct quotation and paraphrasing properly according to the accepted format for the particular discipline or as required by the instructor in a course. Some common examples of plagiarism are: Copying word for word (i.e. quoting directly) from an oral, printed, or electronic source without proper attribution; Paraphrasing without proper attribution, i.e., presenting in one’s own words another person’s written words or ideas as if they were one’s own, regardless of the nature of the assignment; Incorporating into one’s work graphs, drawings, photographs, diagrams, tables, spreadsheets, computer programs, or other non-textual material from other sources, regardless of format, without proper attribution.”

“Cheating: Cheating is the use or possession of inappropriate or prohibited materials, information, sources, or aids in any academic exercise. Cheating also includes submitting papers, research results or reports, analyses, and other textual or visual material and media as one’s own work when others prepared them. Some common examples are: Prohibited collaboration: receiving research, programming, data collection, or analytical assistance from others or working with another student on an assignment where such help is not permitted; Copying another student’s work or answers on a quiz or examination; Using or having access to books, notes, calculators, cell phones, technology, or other prohibited devices or materials during a quiz or examination; Submitting the same work or major portions thereof to satisfy the requirements of more than one course without permission from the instructors involved; Preprograming a calculator or other device to contain answers, formulas, or other unauthorized information for use during a quiz or examination.; Acquiring a copy of an examination from an unauthorized source before the examination; Having a substitute take an examination in one’s place; Submitting a purchased or downloaded term paper or other materials to satisfy a course requirement; Submitting as one’s own work a term paper or other assignment prepared, in whole or in part, by someone else.”

Any faculty member or academic administrator who becomes aware of a possible academic integrity violation must initiate a formal complaint with the Office of Student Conduct and the SSW’s Academic Integrity Facilitator (Laura Curran at lacurran@ssw.rutgers.edu). The AIF deciding the case (the “adjudicator”) shall notify the accused student of the allegation in writing or by electronic communication within fifteen working days of the time the faculty member becomes aware of the alleged violation.

Once the student has been notified of the allegation, the student may not drop the course or withdraw from the school until the adjudication process is complete. A TZ or incomplete grade shall be assigned until the case is resolved. For more information, see RU Academic Integrity Policy and Procedures for Adjudicating Academic Integrity Violations.
To promote a strong culture of academic integrity, Rutgers has adopted the following honor pledge to be written and signed on examinations and major course assignments submitted for grading: *On my honor, I have neither received nor given any unauthorized assistance on this examination/assignment.*

XIV. **Disability Accommodation**

Rutgers University welcomes students with disabilities into all of the University's educational programs. In order to receive consideration for reasonable accommodations, a student with a disability must contact the appropriate disability services office at the campus where you are officially enrolled, participate in an intake interview, and provide documentation: [https://ods.rutgers.edu/students/documentation-guidelines](https://ods.rutgers.edu/students/documentation-guidelines).

If the documentation supports your request for reasonable accommodations, your campus’ disability services office will provide you with a Letter of Accommodations. Please share this letter with your instructors and discuss the accommodations with them as early in your courses as possible. To begin this process, please complete the Registration form on the ODS web site at: [https://ods.rutgers.edu/students/registration-form](https://ods.rutgers.edu/students/registration-form).

XV. **Other Resources**

Our school is committed to fostering a safe, productive learning environment. Title IX and our school policy prohibit discrimination on the basis of sex, which regards sexual misconduct — including harassment, domestic and dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking. We understand that sexual violence can undermine students’ academic success and we encourage students who have experienced some form of sexual misconduct to talk to someone about their experience, so they can get the support they need.

Confidential support and academic advocacy are available through the Rutgers Office on Violence Prevention and Victim Assistance, 732.932.1181, [http://vpva.rutgers.edu](http://vpva.rutgers.edu). Services are free and confidential and available 24 hrs/day, 7 days a week.

XVI. **Active Shooter Resources:**

Over the years, there has been an increase in the number of active shootings on campus. It is important that you know what to do in case there is an active shooter on campus. Please go to this site to retrieve information that will reduce your personal risk in case of an active shooting on campus: [http://rupd.rutgers.edu/shooter.php](http://rupd.rutgers.edu/shooter.php)

XVII. **Course Outline:**

**Week 1 – Introduction to Social Work and the Physical Environment and Related Theories**

**Weekly outline/learning objectives:**
- Review syllabus and course expectations/assignments
- Establish class community
- Introduce students to social work and environmental justice
- Identify theories that will be discussed in the course


**Week 2 - Social Work and the Physical Environment and Related Theories Continued**

**Weekly outline/learning objectives:**
- Examine theories related to social work and the environment
- Evaluate the similarities and differences of the theories


**Week 3 - Cultural Lens on Environment**

**Weekly outline/learning objectives:**
- Examine Indigenous perspective on the environment and human relationships
- Compare Indigenous ideologies with Western framework
- Develop an anti-oppressive, culturally competent approach to social work and the environment


**Week 4 – Sustainability**

**Weekly outline/learning objectives:**
- Define “sustainability”
- Understand the role of “sustainability” in social work and the environment
- Discussion of short paper defining environmental justice


**Week 5 – Environmental Justice**

**Weekly outline/learning objectives:**
- Define “environmental justice”
- Overview of national and international issues of environmental justice
- Sharing of Mind Map


**Week 6 – Global Citizenship**

**Weekly outline/learning objectives:**
- Define “global citizenship”
- Analyze the relationship between people, communities, nations and the environment
- Introduce the differential experiences of marginalized populations


**Week 7- Environmental Diversity - Urban, Suburban and Rural**

**Weekly outline/learning objectives:**
- Identify the various ecological settings and respective needs of and opportunities to serve people and the environment
- Compare and contrast the environmental injustices in each setting
- Identify the groups-at-risk for environmental injustices in each setting


**Week 8 – Migration and Basic Human Rights: Food and Housing**
Weekly outline/learning objectives:

- Discuss the limited opportunities in obtaining housing and food; discuss how these issues are connected to environmental justice
- Discuss the challenges of the marginalized populations in obtaining these resources
- Discuss the role of social work in addressing these issues


**Week 9 – Health and Basic Human Rights: Water**

Weekly outline/learning objectives:

- Discuss the limited opportunities in obtaining water; discuss how this issue is connected to environmental justice
- Discuss the challenges of the marginalized populations in obtaining water
- Discuss the role of social work in addressing these issues


**Week 10 – Resource Crises and Conflict**

Weekly outline/learning objectives:

- Review and identify environmental resource distribution and conflicts created between the privileged and marginalized populations
- Analyze the multidirectional relationships between the privileged, marginalized and the environment
- Examine the role of social workers in addressing environmental crises


**Week 11 - The Experiences of Women and Children**

**Weekly outline/learning objectives:**
- Introduce Ecofeminism frameworks and compare to previously discuss theories
- Examine experiences of environmental injustices as they pertain to socio-economic status
- Examine experiences of environmental injustices as they pertain to age and gender
- Create a social work and the environment justice framework that is inclusive of all experiences


**Week 12 – Incorporating Environment into Clinical Practice**

**Weekly outline/learning objectives:**
- Review clinical interventions incorporating environmental elements
- Discuss the practicalities of infusing such practice in current clinical work
- Begin Advocacy Presentations
Week 13 – Incorporating Environment into Macro Practice

Weekly outline/learning objectives:
- Review macro interventions addressing environmental issues
- Discuss the practicalities of implementing such practices
- Continue Advocacy Presentations


Week 14 – History of Social Work and Innovative Interventions for Current Environmental Issues

Weekly outline/learning objectives:
- Examine the origins of the social work and original incorporation of ecological issues
- Discuss the historical shift to a focus on a social environment
- Devise opportunities in which the social work profession can include environmental issues with innovative solutions
- Continue Advocacy Presentations


**Week 15 – Review Environmental Ethics and Conclusion**

**Weekly outline/learning objectives:**
- Revisit and solidify environmental ethics discussed throughout the course
- Reflect on lessons learned and identify future opportunities to include environmental justice in social work practice
- Wrap-up


